The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
J. H. OLDHAM

No. 10 JANUARY 3, 1940

DEAR MEMBER,

I wish you a good New Year.

A card of greetings from Mass Observation reports the result of an enquiry regarding people's expectations about the New Year. Out of a hundred people who were interrogated, 12 were optimistic, 22 were resigned and 20 saw a dark future with a bright lining. Forty-seven, or nearly half, were pessimists.

If it is true that life is just a stuff "to try the soul's strength on, educe the man," and if Paul was right in believing that nothing can separate us from the love of God, the year, whatever it may bring, contains rich possibilities of good. It will certainly test our faith and perseverance, our courage and endurance. It is an illusion to suppose that the fight against social wrong and human misery, which is a bigger and more difficult business than victory in the war, can be won without the grit and fortitude which find conspicuous expression in the acts of gallantry in war by which we are daily surrounded.

THE POPE AND PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT

Christmas week brought the good news of a fresh rally of the moral forces of the world in strong initiatives by the Pope and President Roosevelt. The co-operation between the ancient institution of the Papacy and the political head of the new world, with its Protestant traditions, in an endeavour to re-assert the claims of the moral law in the conduct of human affairs is a heartening augury as we face the spiritual conflict which lies before us in the New Year.

THE GOAL OF A NEW CHRISTENDOM

The task to which we have to address ourselves is one of heroic proportions. As Mr. Walter Lippmann said last week, the war will leave us with a world "which will need a programme of relief, reconstruction and spiritual succour beyond anything ever undertaken in history."

Nothing short of a revolution can save western society from disaster—a revolution in men's ideas and purposes and scale of values, expressing itself in revolutionary changes in their relations with one another and in the structure of existing society. If this transformation is to be brought about, the problem must be attacked along a number of converging lines. Unless we see this clearly we shall just muddle along and achieve little. Let me indicate five distinct tasks—each of them immense, each of them necessary. They are not all in equal degree the direct concern of the Church in its corporate capacity; but they are all alike essential to a better social order. Neglect any one of them and there will never be a society deserving of the name of a new Christendom.

THE QUICKENING OF FAITH

First, there must be a reawakening of religious faith and rekindling of religious passion. There will be no large scale revolution without a body of people whose minds and hearts have been possessed by a vitalising and liberating conviction about the nature of reality. They must know that they are not carrying on their own shoulders the burden of a superhuman task but are borne forward by eternal forces. There is all the difference in the world between a faith which we have to carry and a faith which carries us. There is no force strong enough to change society except the creative activity of those who have been freed from the fetters of fear and egoism to live adventurously in the service of God and their fellow-men.

A SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

Secondly, it is necessary that the national life should be guided by a widely accepted social purpose embodied in a social philosophy. The lack of a sufficiently clear and strong social purpose is our chief weakness in the war and may be fatal to effective re-construction when it is over. To create a better society there must be some agreement about what life is *for*, and what are the values that we want to realise.

I have some question about saying that what is needed is a *Christian* social philosophy. In a mixed society, such as ours, a social philosophy which is to shape public policy must be one which has the convinced support of many who do not call themselves Christians. Moreover, Christ's call to an uncalculating allegiance and to moral perfection are, as I urged last week, only *indirectly* applicable to the collective activities of a society which is not fully committed to the pursuit of Christian ends.

On the other hand, it is a vital matter for Christians whether the dominant social purpose is one which acknowledges and embodies Christian standards and values, or one which negates them. In the latter case the Christian who takes part in the activities of the common life is forced to deny in his daily acts the faith by which he desires to live.

It is not the business of the Church in its corporate capacity to endorse a social philosophy beyond the assertion of broad fundamental principles. Into any social philosophy which is related to the conditions of a particular age there must enter judgments of facts, tendencies, and the practical working of institutions on which the Church, as such, is not competent to pronounce. But it is a crucial matter for the Christian cause that there should *be* a constructive social faith and purpose leavened with Christian insights and values. This can come about only if Christians take an active initiative in working out a social philosophy. The Church must, therefore, lay this responsibility on its members and give them assistance in the task. That seems to me to be one of the main reasons for setting up a body like the Council on the Christian Faith and the Common Life. It is a task, moreover, to which the Christian News-Letter and the C.N.L. books, about which an announcement will be made shortly, must make such contribution as they can.

POLITICAL ACTION

Thirdly, we cannot get a better society without changes in its institutions. As ideas and values change, the social structure must change with them. As a matter of fact our own society is changing with unprecedented rapidity. This was true before the war, but under war conditions changes are taking place within a few days or weeks that in ordinary times might take decades to bring about. It is a vital matter to know where these changes are taking us; whether the society which is taking shape is one which will leave larger room for the Christian values or one which will negate and

ppress them. The only way in which, in the organised life of society, desirable changes n be brought about, and undesirable changes prevented, is by political action. All k about a better society is idle day-dreaming till it is translated into public policy. To ppose that we can meet the needs of other men to-day by individual action, except thin a very restricted field, is to be blind to the nature of modern society. We can ve men only by *social* action, which either creates or denies opportunity. Political e to-day is the real battlefield between the forces of love and callousness, of justice d injustice. For this reason a recall to religion must necessarily mean a recall to litics.

It is not the business of the Church as an ecclesiastical body to identify itself with y political party or programme. Its altarsmust be open to members of different politi- parties. But it must train its members to see that it is an essential element in their ristian dedication to fulfil their responsibility to God in the political sphere. Unless ey commit themselves to political ends which they believe to be in accord with His rpose, the actual life of society will be a contradiction of the truth which the Church oclaims, and that truth will consequently be regarded as an unreal dream.

IDESPREAD INITIATIVE

Fourthly, there must be vigorous local as well as central action. Society is not machine that can be entirely controlled from a single centre. Under conditions of ge-scale political and economic organisation central co-ordination is essential. But s none the less true that society is composed of a multitude of living persons each ntributing his or her personal experience and effort to the total life. The trans- rmation of society, therefore, requires the activity of hundreds of thousands of ividuals who are changing their immediate environment in the right direction. This ntaneous, creative initiative and exercise of responsibility by individual persons is haps the most important and valuable element in the democratic idea.

For the ordinary lay man or woman a whole-hearted dedication to the cause of new Christendom will mean a fresh discovery of what it means to love one's ghbour as oneself, expressing itself, first, in a deepened recognition of the social nificance of the family and fulfilment of responsibility in that field ; in increased rticipation in the work of local government, in social services of all kinds, and in rticular in the service of youth ; and thirdly in a renewed consecration to the task reshaping industrial, commercial and professional life in the light of Christian ndards.

For the clergy it will mean an increased awareness of the significance of these leavours of the Christian laity as an essential expression of the life of the Church d, secondly, a readiness to devise new means of providing encouragement and help those engaged in them.

IE CONTRIBUTION OF SCIENCE

Fifthly, for the bringing into existence of a better order of society the disinterested entific study of social facts, forces and institutions is indispensable. No amount of ristian devotion and goodwill, no social philosophy, however flawless, no political ion, however vigorous, will bring us to our goal if we ignore or misread the facts and ces of the world with which we have to deal. The task of creating a healthy social ler demands the co-operation of a multitude of scientific workers. These must not content to be historians *and* Christians, or economists *and* Christians, but, while pre- ving a complete scientific disinterestedness in the study of their particular field,

they must see clearly the relation of their life-work to the common Christian task a fulfil it as members of the Christian fellowship.

The Church, as a corporate society, has no direct responsibility for this scienti task any more than for other activities of the secular life. But it must have a new und standing of the relation of a growing scientific knowledge to its own spiritual ministri and of the indispensability of this knowledge to the growth of a better social order.

What is important in this letter is not whether what I have said about each these tasks is in the main right or in some respects needs correction. Any tre ment of such large themes in a dozen lines is bound to be quite inadequate. T one thing which I want to bring home is that if we are to make anything of t colossal task that awaits us, we must envisage it in this comprehensive way. Th is not one task but many—all necessary, but all different, to be pursued by differ methods and carried out by different groups of people. To jumble them up togeth will keep us from tackling any of them with the directness and concentration w which it must be taken in hand.

I thought it well to start the year by trying to get a picture of the total ta Let us keep it steadily in view as we go on to give attention to specific, concr efforts and to address ourselves to the business of sending, as the advertisement sa "something to someone somewhere in France."

A PROMISE FOR THE NEW YEAR

Among my Christmas cards was one from the Bishop of Hull containi a quotation from Julian, Anchoress at Norwich, 1373, which is worth passing o "He said not, Thou shalt not be tempested, thou shalt not be travailed, thou sh not be afflicted; but He said, *Thou shalt not be overcome.*"

MEMBERSHIP

Thank you for the encouragement you have brought us by the splendid respo to our Christmas gift scheme. You have in this way added 1,242 new members our roll and brought our membership up to 7,940.

Yours sincerely,

J. H. Oldham

Subscriptions.—The rate of subscription to the *News-Letter* is 10s. ($3 in U.S.A. and Cana for one year, and 5s. 6d. ($1.50 in U.S.A. and Canada) for six months.

All communications and subscriptions should be sent to—

THE CHRISTIAN NEWS-LETTER, 20, BALCOMBE STREET, DORSET SQUARE, LONDON, N.W.1.

Published by Dr. J. H. Oldham for the Council on the Christian Faith and the Common Life and printed St. Clements Press, Ltd., Portugal Street, London, W.C.2.

IE CHRISTIAN
EWS-LETTER
NUARY 3rd, 1940

The Supplement
No. 10

THE WORLD-WIDE CHRISTIAN SOCIETY

The God in whom Christians believe—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of the Incarnation, Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ—is a Living God. There is no surer guide for us than to try to see what He is actually doing in the world and to let ourselves be ruled by that, even though it may lead us into ways of thought and action that go clean against appearances.

One of the signs of God's working in the world is the fact that during the centuries there has grown up a body of people, drawn from all races, nations and cultures, which acknowledges a supreme loyalty to Jesus Christ and a consequent common bond with one another. The ordinary Christian in our country is too little conscious of this and knows too little about it. He knows a good deal about the failures and weaknesses of the Church. He does not let himself draw the inspiration that he might, not from what men have done in the Church, but from what God has done and what He offers through it to mankind.

THE RAPID GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

The truth is that the growth of the Church throughout the world has been more rapid and more widely spread in the last century and a half than in any period of history, and this is true of the Protestant and Catholic traditions alike. The Church has always been growing, since the early days when men were first called "Christians" in derision, though the growth has been uneven and there have been periods of comparative stagnation. In these latter generations the Church has shown more independence of the secular arm in its expansion, and also more courage in approaching the ancient developed cultures of the East, than ever before. Let us consider some of the outstanding facts.

A hundred years ago Japan was a country in which the profession of Christianity by a Japanese or the preaching of it by a foreigner were alike punishable by death. To-day there is a living and vigorous Church, small but influential beyond its numbers. In China out of the 440 millions of people only about three millions, Protestant and Catholic together, are Christians, but that would have seemed an incredible achievement a century ago. What is more important than numbers is quality, and it is not an insignificant thing that the heroic General and his wife, whose nerve and moral power are so great a part of the Chinese resistance to Japanese aggression, should be convinced Christians. With them are a remarkable number of other Chinese Christians in positions of national leadership.

In India the extension of the Christian community has been still greater, and in recent years very rapid. There are now over six millions of Christians in India. While the mass movement into the Christian Church of the "untouchables" contributes the greater part of these numbers (and a very wonderful movement it is), there has been a remarkable permeation of Indian thought and life by Christianity, and Christians are found in positions of leadership out of all proportion to their numbers.

Africa is another vast area in which we can now think, as we could not until a generation ago, of a living Christian Church. Here the percentage of Christians is higher than in Asia. It is widely recognised that as tribalism dissolves under the combined impact of Western government, trade and education, Christianity is the only influence that can remake African society. In Madagascar there is a great Church running into hundreds of thousands of members.

In the Dutch island empire there are two

million Christians, and in parts of the area almost the whole population has come within the bounds of the Church. Parts of the South Seas show island communities not only themselves Christian but busily engaged in sending their own missionaries to other parts of the vast archipelago.

Perhaps it will be said that this large extension to peoples of non-European tradition is accompanied by a loss of grip in the lands of the West. That the dominant ideas of our western society are at least as much non-Christian as Christian can hardly be denied. But again the facts of Church expansion are startling. In the United States, at the end of the colonial period, probably not more than 5 per cent. of the people belonged to any branch of the Christian Church. To-day approximately one-half of the population of the U.S.A. is found within the membership of the Churches. Make what deductions we like, and it remains an astonishing fact. The bare figures cover a wealth of hard, patient, unassuming labour by Christian folk who followed westward the ever-moving frontier, determined to claim the growing population for the Faith. The same has been true in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The great dispersion of the British and other European races in the new continents was followed by the Church in a degree and with a success too little known and acknowledged.

It is true to-day, as it has not been true in any other epoch of history, that the Christian Church in its different forms and groupings is rooted in the soil of every land. The secular historian cannot ignore so outstanding a fact.

GREATER UNITY AND CO-OPERATION

But numbers and extension are very far from being everything. This vast extension has been accompanied in recent years by another tendency not less striking. This is the drawing together of different groups of Christians in sympathy and understanding. The focal points of this process have been great world conferences, and though it is possible to overrate the importance of such occasions—and their importance lies not in themselves but in the processes they dramatise—it is a sufficiently remarkable tale. A little more than two years ago two gre gatherings at Oxford and at Edinburg brought together men and women fro almost every branch of organised Christiani save only the Church of Rome, and from there were present unofficial observer Orthodox from the Balkans and Russia-i Exile, Old Catholics, Lutheran an Reformed from the Continent, Anglica and Free Churchmen, all the many America groups—representing every sort of traditio and division they came together. The resu has been a profound desire among those wh are most widely different in attitude an conviction to understand one another an learn from one another. Nothing could b further from the American temperament i religion than the views associated with th name of the great Swiss theologian Ka Barth, but there is no country where the is a greater desire to understand him than i the United States. It is now seen that th kind of fellowship which arises from identit of beliefs is not the only nor perhaps th most fruitful kind, and that a certain rich ness of experience awaits those who ar willing to face the difficulty and tension o getting to grips with radically opposed view

This growing fellowship among Christian has been expressed to some extent in organ ised form. On the side of missionar endeavour the International Missionar Council has for nearly thirty years, in on form or another, been the instrument o world-wide co-operation in the evangelisa tion of the world. Behind the great confer ences of 1937 lay organisations which ar now coming together into a World Counc of Churches. Organisations are wholly un important except as they express and assis life, and there is to-day an unmistakabl desire all over the world to give outwar form to the growing sense of common loyalt and common life in Christ.

THE RELEVANCE OF THE CHURCH

The total result of both processes—tha of extension and that of mutual understand ing—is that to-day there exists in the world to a far greater extent than most men o affairs are aware, a Christian fellowshi

hich includes within itself all divisions f race and colour, nation and culture, class, overnment and economic condition and yet oes hold together and knows that it does. How does this fact bear upon our present istresses? In many ways, but mainly along vo different though related lines.

HE DANGER OF A NATIONALIST HRISTIANITY

This growing knowledge among Christians iat they belong to a fellowship which exnds beyond racial and national bounds iust affect profoundly the life of the separte Churches within the nations. The anger that besets the Church in time of ar—and most of all when the cause for hich the nation is waging war is generally greed to be just—is that it should become irtually an aspect of the national culture. is fatally easy for a Church within a single ation to become the mouthpiece only of the obler national aspirations, not the iessenger of the judgment and mercy of iod. But if members and leaders of the ocal or national Church remember always iat they represent, locally or nationally, a niversal fellowship, they will be delivered om the perils of a merely nationalist hristianity, and they will be bulwarks to ll that is sane and decent in the spirit of the ation.

This is not merely an optimistic dream. has been shown to happen already in the ar East. We western people with our inrained parochialism do not consider that iere is war in the world unless it is in urope, and Christians have discussed what ney would do "if war came" to the world, blivious of the fact that it had come in rrible form to millions of the human race, nd that the problem of the Church in time f war was being actually lived and prayed ut by their fellow-Christians of China and apan. Who can fail to admire the superb hristian bearing of the Chinese Christians? n the great gathering held in December, 1938, t Madras—a third in the sequence of world hristians gatherings—no word of bitterness ell from the Chinese; they could meet as hristians with the Japanese Christians and, ithout abating a jot of their conviction of the purity of their country's cause, still face with the Japanese the issues that separated their countries on the basis of a common fellowship that was not broken. One well-known Chinese, Dr. T. Z. Koo, told the conference, in words they would not soon forget, that it was easy to talk about loving your enemy when he was a thousand miles away, but what of it "when your enemy is standing on your door-step *waiting to be loved?*" There were many from the West who, as they saw what a common Christianity meant in creating a fellowship between these two peoples, felt that the older Christianity of the West had need to sit at the feet of these younger Christians and relearn the meaning of the world fellowship of Christians.

What is said of China and Japan is fully applicable to England and Germany. Our national loyalty and conviction and our desire to commend our cause to God should not make us forget that we belong to a single fellowship with the Christians of Germany, and that we must not behave as if the fact of war automatically ended that fellowship. It does not end it, and whatever temporary unpopularity may attend a faithful acceptance of the consequences of this fact, a Church that forgets that it is a part of the Church universal will deserve the bitter reproaches which will be heaped on it, when the fever of war is past, by masses of decent, ordinary folk, who will rightly hold that they were betrayed, and denied the true teaching by those who had it to give.

THE CHURCH AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

But if a sense of the Church universal may help to keep the national groups of Christians from identifying the Church and the nation or state, it can do something else. It can offer a new and unique contribution to the building of a better world. Not that it is the Church's job, as the Church, to lay down the blue-prints of an ideal international order. It can do something better. There is widespread desire for a genuine international community in which the rule of law would oust the spectre of war, as within the single state the rule of law eliminates private

war. There is one chief difficulty. There does not exist between nations the sense of common moral obligation and commitment to one another which underlies the structure of law within a state. It is just here that the kind of fellowship now growing in the consciousness of Christians can most affect the future. The Church comes to the international task with a fellowship which is more than "international." It is not built up on the basis of national groups; it begins with the knowledge in the heart of every Christian man that because he is, as St. Paul puts it, "in Christ," he is therefore a member with others in a unity which is given to him a which he does not create.

That is the point. The world is weary aspirations and of being exhorted about duty. If there can be brought to it not aspiration but the declaration of a fact will listen. The more the sense grows amo Christians, as it is growing, that they made members of a common fellowship their Master, the more they will supply nations that are trying to build a new un something of the inner trust and united sp on which alone a true community can based.

WILLIAM PATON

All communications and subscriptions should be sent to—

THE CHRISTIAN NEWS-LETTER, 20, BALCOMBE STREET,

DORSET SQUARE, LONDON, N.W.1.

Published by Dr. J. H. Oldham for the Council on the Christian Faith and the Common Life and printed
St. Clements Press, Ltd., Portugal Street, London, W.C.2.